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Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Letter dated 28 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a letter dated 25 December 1998 from Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, and its annex, the Baghdad Declaration of Human Rights, adopted at the Baghdad International Conference held from 8 to 10 December 1998 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 46 (a).

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(*Signed*) Nizar **Hamdoon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

98-40622 (E) 050199 050199

Annex

Letter dated 25 December 1998 from Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, addressed to the Secretary-General

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Government and people of Iraq, believing in human rights and the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the highest shared ideal of humanity, held an international conference in Baghdad from 8 to 10 December 1998, which was attended by many Arab, foreign and Iraqi specialists in the field of human rights and international law. The declaration adopted at the conference, the Baghdad Declaration of Human Rights, affirmed the importance of the promotion and protection of human rights. It also considered the challenges faced by peoples to their enjoyment of their basic rights and the need for concerted international efforts to overcome such challenges. Among the issues considered in the Declaration were the obstacles to the Iraqi people's exercise of all their basic rights, foremost of which is the right to life and survival, and the effects on human rights of the embargo imposed on Iraq for eight years.

Those who took part in the Baghdad International Conference requested that your attention be drawn to the Declaration and expressed the hope that you would assume the role consonant with your legal and humanitarian responsibilities and help to put an end to the humanitarian tragedy to which the Iraqi people is being subjected and end the embargo that is tantamount to a true crime of genocide.

Appendix

The Baghdad Declaration of Human Rights

8 to 10 December 1998

The Baghdad International Conference,

Held in Baghdad from 8 to 10 December 1998 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Recalling Hammurabi's code, enacted by the Iraqi people more than 3,000 years ago in order to promote justice, remove corruption, protect the weak from the oppression of the powerful, uphold women's rights and regulate the affairs of society,

Recalling with pride the values and principles of the glorious Islamic Shariah regarding equality, freedom, justice and lack of discrimination, and the guarantees it has provided for human rights for more than 14 centuries,

Recalling also the belief of the Iraqi Government and people in the principles regarding human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is an international affirmation of the rights and freedoms that should be enjoyed by every member of the human race, and which apply to every person wherever he may be,

Bearing in mind all the undertakings set forth in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights instruments, including the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

Bearing in mind also the aspirations of all peoples to an international order based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations respecting the right to equality, non-interference in internal affairs, the right to self-determination and development, the obligation to refrain from the threat or use of force and to maintain international peace and security,

Noting that the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights comes at a time when the peoples of the developing world are living in the shadow of hunger, poverty, marginalization, violence and intimidation, the violation of economic, social and cultural rights and of civil and political rights, and when the selfish interests and political and economic considerations of certain powerful States preponderate,

Affirming its repudiation of aggression, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, unscrupulous economic practices and foreign occupation,

Considering that the eradication of poverty represents a basic and essential condition of the right to life and the enjoyment of human rights,

Recalling the importance of respect for the religious, social and cultural particularities of peoples, since they represent heritages and sources of strength that contribute to the enrichment of the universal understanding of human rights and are inconsistent with cultural alienation and the stripping of human rank from peoples and nations,

Affirming the importance of considering human rights objectively and non-selectively and of refraining from taking measures, on the pretext of protecting human rights, that do not accord with international law and constitute a flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international human rights instruments,

Affirming also the responsibility of all States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to work jointly and

severally in order to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction and achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian nature, and affirming further that human rights and democracy cannot produce a better world in the absence of a structure of true peace and sustained economic development,

Noting that the media play an important role in the objective exposure of human rights violations, without applying political and ideological pressures, and in a manner consistent with moral principles and values,

Concerned by the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq and all the negative effects entailed thereby on social and humanitarian activities, which impede the full exercise of the rights provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Noting the studies and research presented during the Conference and the discussions that have made alarmingly and distressingly clear the enormous numbers of civilian casualties caused by the sanctions that have been imposed on Iraq for more than eight years, and the fear that the number of victims will increase if the sanctions are not lifted forthwith,

Aware that the people of the world, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, are hopeful that it will be free of oppression, individual violence and tyranny,

1. *Calls upon* all States to honour their undertakings to strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and to promote and protect them at the international level, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant instruments;

2. *Affirms* that human rights in the widest and fairest sense and in all economic, social, cultural, civil and political aspects should be used to achieve international cooperation and solidarity;

3. *Affirms* the right of all peoples to self-determination, to choose their political systems and to strive to achieve economic, social and cultural development in complete freedom;

4. *Affirms* that the universality of human rights should not be used as a pretext for intervention in the internal affairs of States or to diminish their national sovereignty; the importance of a commitment from the international community to consider human rights objectively and without selectivity or discrimination, and of endeavouring to find a global system that shows compassion for the weak and guarantees human rights and development for all;

5. *Calls upon* States to refrain from taking or implementing any measures of a coercive nature that have dangerous implications for civilians and obstruct complete enjoyment of the rights provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the other relevant international instruments;

6. *Rejects* the use of such measures as a means of applying political or economic pressure on any country, and on developing countries in particular, in view of their negative effects on human rights;

7. *Expresses* its extreme concern with regard to the terrible and continuing loss of civilian life in Iraq because of the dangerous lack of medicine and food caused by the embargo attested to in the reports of the relevant international agencies and organizations;

8. *Affirms* that the economic measures imposed on Iraq include depriving the whole Iraqi people of its means of subsistence and of its right to life, and violate the international norms relating to human rights in a manner that amounts to genocide;

9. *Demands* that the Governments of the United States of America and the United Kingdom abandon their insistence on continuing to impose the sanctions for their own political considerations, indifferent to the attendant humanitarian consequences, which conflict with the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the other international instruments;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to demonstrate genuine concern with regard to the serious repercussions of the embargo on the people of Iraq, and put an end to the enormous and continual loss of civilian life;

11. *Requests* the Security Council to honour its undertaking to lift the embargo once Iraq has complied with its obligations pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions, since the embargo imposed on Iraq has a serious effect on the enjoyment of all the rights provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the relevant international instruments;

12. *Strongly condemns* the continued intervention of the United States and the United Kingdom in the internal affairs of Iraq, their imposition of "no-fly" zones, their announcement that sums of money would be allocated to operations designed to undermine the national and territorial integrity of Iraq, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and relevant international conventions, in particular as regards the right to self-determination, respect for sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States;

13. *Condemns* the policy of the United States administration of intervening in the internal affairs of States, threatening their territorial integrity, imposing unilateral sanctions and practising State terrorism such as the destruction of the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in the Sudan;

14. *Urges* all peoples, Governments, parliaments, international humanitarian organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals to work towards having the embargo lifted and ending the humanitarian tragedy to which the Iraqi people is being exposed, and in embodiment of the lofty principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.